

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
HA-05 IO-13 /079 W
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R 230750Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1019
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USMISSION USNATO

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E.O.11652: NA
TAGS: PERP PGOV PINT SHUM HU RO
SUBJECT: NATIONAL DAY, NATIONALISM AND THE NATIONAL MINORITY
IN ROMANIA

1. SUMMARY: SPEECH BY HUNGARIAN PEOPLE'S PATRIOTIC FRONT (PPF) OFFICIAL ON OCCASION COMMEMORATING "REVOLUTIONARY" ASSERTION OF INDEPENDENCE BY HUNGARIANS MAR 15, 1848, HAD A MORE NATIONALISTIC TONE THAN IS USUAL ON SUCH OCCASIONS. IT CAME CLOSER TO BEING AN OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENT ON THE MINORITY QUESTION IN EASTERN EUROPE THAN ANYTHING SAID OR PUBLISHED IN BUDAPEST HERETOFORE. IT ALSO MARKED THE CULMINATION OF A GRADUAL REHABILITATION OF MAR 15 AS AN IMPORTANT HUNGARIAN HOLIDAY. END SUMMARY.

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2. OVER PAST DECADES, HOLIDAY OF MAR 15, WHICH WAS ONE OF TWO MAJOR HUNGARIAN NATIONAL HOLIDAYS PRIOR TO 1947, HAS REGAINED ITS RESPECTABILITY IF NOT ITS FORMER PROMINENCE. REVOLUTIONARY ACTION OF HUNGARIANS IN 1848, LED BY YOUTHFUL POET SANDOR PETOFI AND OTHERS, HAS ALWAYS BEEN FAVORABLY REGARDED BY COMMUNISTS WHO, HOWEVER, HAVE DOWNPLAYED STRICTLY NATIONALIS-

TIC ELEMENTS OF THAT CELEBRATION. TODAY HOLIDAY IS CHIEFLY CONSIDERED A YOUTH HOLIDAY. BANKS AND OFFICES ARE OPEN BUT SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED. COMMEMORATION IS ORGANIZED BY THE HUNGARIAN COMMUNIST YOUTH LEAGUE (KISZ). ANTI-SOVIET OR NATIONALISTIC CELEBRATIONS HAVE OCCURRED ON MAR 15 IN THE PAST. ACCORDINGLY, SECURITY PRECAUTIONS ARE STILL TAKEN, BUT OFFICIAL ORGANIZATIONS, PRIMARILY KISZ AND PPF, HAVE MOVED TO COOPT HOLIDAY FOR THE REGIME. NOWADAYS, CONFIRMING A PROCESS WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE OVER PAST TWO-THREE YEARS, THOSE WHO WISH ARE ENCOURAGED TO WEAR A SMALL REPLICA OF THE HUNGARIAN FLAG ON THEIR LAPELS AS SYMBOL OF THEIR PATRIOTISM. NOT TOO LONG AGO ONLY THE HARDY WOULD DO SO.

3. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THERE WERE NO STARTLING DIFFERENCES IN THE PARADES, WREATH LAYING, AND OTHER CEREMONIES SURROUNDING THIS YEAR'S CELEBRATIONS. AT THE SAME TIME, SPEECH MADE AT NATIONAL MUSEUM BY LASZLO HEGEDUS, A SECRETARY OF THE PEOPLE'S PATRIOTIC FRONT AND A MEMBER OF THE HSWP DEPARTMENT FOR PARTY AND MASS ORGANIZATIONS, STRUCK A STRONGLY NATIONALISTIC TONE WHICH, WHILE APPROPRIATE FOR THE OCCASION, IS A TONE SELDOM STRUCK IN HUNGARIAN OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL STATEMENTS. THE SPEECH WAS CARRIED IN ALL HUNGARIAN DAILIES.

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4. HEGEDUS FIRST LAUDED MAR 15 AS A HIGH FESTIVAL OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE. HE SAID ALL HUNGARIANS BOTH WITHIN AND BEYOND FRONTIERS OF HUNGARY REMEMBER THIS DAY WITH GRATITUDE AND ENTHUSIASM. HE NOTED THE DAY'S SIGNIFICANCE IS VALID FOR TODAY AND WILL REMAIN VALID IN FUTURE. RETAINING THIS ATTITUDE OF SPEAKING FIRST AND FOREMOST TO HUNGARIANS IN HUNGARY BUT CLEARLY TO ALL HUNGARIANS WHEREEVER THEY MIGHT RESIDE, HE CONTINUED BY STRESSING THAT ATTACHMENT TO LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND CUSTOMS DOES NOT SEPARATE HUNGARIANS FROM OTHER PEOPLES BUT LINKS THEM TO THOSE PEOPLES. STEERING CAREFULLY ONWARD, HEGEDUS SAID THAT IT IS A HISTORIC LESSON OF 1848 THAT NO NATION'S FREEDOM CAN BE SAFE WHILE OTHER NATIONS' NATIONAL MINORITIES ARE OPPOSED. HE THEN SAID HUNGARY MUST ASSURE THAT IT DOES IT SHARE TO SEE THAT NATIONAL MINORITIES IN HUNGARY HAVE FULL RIGHTS. HE SPOKE OF A MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY WHICH MEANS THAT EVERYONE SHOULD WORK HARD WHERE HE LIVES AND SERVE THE COUNTRY WHERE HE LIVES. SIMULTANEOUSLY, HUNGARY WILL BUILD "A SOCIALIST SOCIETY WITH

DEEP RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE HUNGARIAN NATION. THE STRENGTHENING OF THE FATHERLAND, THE INTERNAL PROSPERITY OF THE NATION, IS THE MAIN CONDITION OF THE FULFILLMENT OF OUR INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND ALSO OF OUR (BEGIN UNDERLINE) RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERY HUNGARIAN (END UNDERLINE) (EMPHASIS ADDED) AND FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE WHOLE OF MANKIND," HEGEDUS SAID.

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5. CEREMONIES AT NATIONAL MUSEUM, SITE OF PETOFI'S HISTORIC READING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY POEM WHICH HELPED FIRE THE EVENTS OF 1848 IN HUNGARY, WAS ATTENDED BY LASZLO MAROTHY, POLITBURO MEMBER AND MEMBER OF KISZ CENTRAL COMMITTEE AS WELL AS GYULA KALLAI, CHAIRMAN OF THE PPF, AND MRS ANDRAS KIRALY, SECRETARY OF THE BUDAPEST PARTY COMMITTEE.

6. COMMENT: HEGEDUS'S SPEECH, DELIVERED AS IT WAS ON A MAJOR OCCASION AND BEFORE SUCH HIGH-RANKING OFFICIALS AS MAROTHY AND KALLAI, MUST HAVE BEEN OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED. THUS, IT SHOULD BE REGARDED AS THE CLOSEST THING YET TO AN OFFICIAL HUNGARIAN

STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION OF THE ETHNIC HUNGARIANS
IN ROMANIA. IT THEREFORE REPRESENTS SOMEWHAT OF AN
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ESCALATION IN THE PUBLIC ATTENTION WHICH THE HUNGA-
RIAN REGIME IS GIVING THAT SITUATION.

7. HEGEDUS'S REMARKS ABOUT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF
MINORITIES TOWARD THE STATE IN WHICH THEY LIVE
CLEARLY REFLECTS THE OFFICIAL HUNGARIAN POSITION
THAT THE ETHNIC HUNGARIANS IN ROMANIA ARE A ROMANIAN,
NOT HUNGARIAN, CONCERN. ON THE OTHER HAND, HIS
REMARKS ABOUT THE LINKS BETWEEN HUNGARY AND HUNGA-
RIANS EVERYWHERE SHOW JUST AS CLEARLY THAT THE
HUNGARIAN REGIME IS NOT INDIFFERENT TO THE FATE OF
HUNGARIANS LIVING OUTSIDE THE BORDERS OF HUNGARY.
WHEN THEY ARE COUPLED WITH HIS STATEMENT THAT NO
NATION'S FREEDOM CAN BE SAFE WHILE OTHER NATION'S
MINORITIES ARE OPPRESSED, IT APPEARS AS IF HEGEDUS'S
SPEECH WAS CALCULATED TO PUT THE ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT
ON FURTHER NOTICE THAT HUNGARY IS WATCHING ITS ACTIONS CLOSELY.

8. PERHAPS IT SHOULD BE MENTIONED HERE, SO THAT IT
IS NOT LOST SIGHT OF, THAT THE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT
HAS NOT MADE, NOR GIVEN ANY HINT THAT IT WILL MAKE,
ANY TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AGAINST ROMANIA, OR ANY OTHER
STATE. HUNGARIAN IRREDENTISM IS NOT THE ISSUE.
RATHER, THE HUNGARIAN REGIME HAS PERMITTED INCREASED
PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION SUFF-
FERED BY THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN ROMANIA. CEAUSESCU'S
SPEECH TO THE HUNGARIAN AND GERMAN WORKERS' COUNCILS
(BUCHAREST 1739) WAS WIDELY REPORTED IN HUNGARIAN
PRESS. IT IS REGARDED IN BUDAPEST AS A STEP IN THE
RIGHT DIRECTION IN THAT CEAUSESCU ADMITTED THAT DIS-
CRIMINATION EXISTS. THE HUNGARIANS HOPE THAT THE MEASURES
HE ANNOUNCED WILL HELP CORRECT THE SITUATION.

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9. IN RECENT MONTHS THE GOH HAS DISPLAYED A DESIRE
TO KEEP PRESSURE ON THE ROMANIANS TO FULFILL THE
ACCORDS REACHED BETWEEN CEAUSESCU AND KADAR LAST
SUMMER. THE HUNGARIANS HOPE FOR QUICKER PROGRESS ON
THE CONSULATES IN DEBRECEN AND CLUJ, AND WIDENING OF
THE BORDER ZONE. THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THESE
ACCORDS HAVE NEVER BEEN PUBLISHED BUT PROBABLY REFER

TO LIBERALIZED TREATMENT FOR THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL
MINORITY IN ROMANIA. IF PROGRESS IS MADE HERE, THE
PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THESE QUESTIONS WILL PROBABLY SLACKEN.

10. FINALLY EMBASSY POINTS OUT THAT IN FOCUSING AT
LENGTH OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF HEGEDUS'S REMARKS ON
HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS WE SHOULD NOT LOSE
SIGHT OF FACT THAT HEGEDUS'S NATIONALISTIC SPEECH DID
NOT LIMIT ITSELF TO MINORITIES QUESTION. IT WAS A
GENERAL APPEAL TO NATIONAL SENTIMENT. IT CORRESPONDED
WELL, AND PROBABLY CONSCIOUSLY SO, WITH HUNGARY'S LONG
STANDING ASSERTION OF ITS RIGHT TO PURSUE ITS OWN
NATIONAL PATH TO BUILDING A DEVELOPED COMMUNIST SOCIETY.
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